

WE CLAIM:

1. A point of care station comprising:  
a cabinet having at least a first securable compartment that is adapted to hold items;  
a pylon assembly; and  
docking means for use in docking the cabinet to the pylon assembly and also for use in undocking the cabinet from the pylon assembly.
2. The point of care station of claim 1 additionally comprising a processing unit and a terminal, wherein said processing unit is operatively connected to the terminal.
3. The point of care station of claim 2 wherein said terminal comprises a display means and input means.
4. The point of care station of claim 1 wherein said terminal additionally comprises means to access clinical and non-clinical information.
5. The point of care station of claim 3 wherein said display is adapted to illustrate any and all items within said first securable compartment.
6. The point of care station of claim 3 wherein the said input means is adapted to record the status of items within the first securable compartment.
7. The point of care station of claim 4 wherein the access to non-clinical information comprises access to at least one feature selected from the group consisting of television, internet, digital video, movies, music, games, electronic purchases, messaging tools, telephone and patient educational services.

8. The point of care station of claim 4 wherein the access to clinical information comprises access to at least one feature selected from the group consisting of medical records, billing records, vendor information, inventory management, hospital services, digital imaging, medicine usage data, medical test results, and electronic purchases.

9. The point of care station of claim 1 wherein said pylon assembly is fixed to a room surface.

10. The point of care station of claim 2 further comprising an arm that supports said terminal.

11. The point of care station of claim 10 wherein said arm is articulated.

12. The point of care station of claim 10 wherein said terminal further comprises at least a first handle adapted for moving said terminal with respect to the pylon assembly and with respect to the arm.

13. The point of care station of claim 2 wherein said terminal further comprises at least one item selected from the group consisting of a magnetic card reader, biometric reader-sensor, proximity reader, radio frequency identification reader, speakers, headphone connection, telephone, symbology reader, video camera, bar code reader, touchscreen monitor and call button.

14. The point of care station of claim 1 wherein the pylon assembly provides at least one of power and communication link to the cabinet when the cabinet is docked to the pylon assembly.

15. The point of care station of claim 1 wherein said cabinet is movable.
16. The point of care station of claim 1 wherein said cabinet is adapted to be physically secured to said pylon.
17. The point of care station of claim 15 wherein said cabinet additionally comprises at least one wheel.
18. The point of care station of claim 17 wherein said cabinet additionally comprises at least a first handle for use in moving the cabinet.
19. The point of care station of claim 1 wherein the first securable compartment is unlocked by the processing unit.
20. The point of care station of claim 1 wherein said compartment is a drawer.
21. The point of care station of claim 13 wherein the first securable compartment adapted for holding medications, the cabinet further comprising at least a first supply compartment for use in holding general supplies.
22. The point of care station of claim 21 wherein the first supply compartment comprises a handle and the first securable compartment does not.
23. The point of care station of claim 19 wherein the first securable compartment automatically opens a short distance from the cabinet when said compartment is unlocked.
24. The point of care station of claim 2 wherein said processing unit is operatively connected to said cabinet.

25. The point of care system of claim 2 wherein said processing unit is operatively connected to said terminal via a wireless communications link.
26. The point of care station of claim 24 wherein said processing unit is operatively connected to said cabinet via a wireless communications link.
27. The point of care station of claim 2 wherein said processing unit is located in one of the group consisting of said cabinet, said pylon assembly and said terminal.
28. The point of care station of claim 10 wherein said processing unit is located in said arm.
29. The point of care station of claim 1 wherein said docking means is a communications link between said cabinet and said pylon assembly and said cabinet is not physically secured to said pylon assembly.
30. The point of care station of claim 19 wherein the cabinet further comprises indicator means for indicating if the first securable compartment is unlocked or for indicating if the first securable compartment contains a selected item.
31. The point of care station of claim 30 wherein said indicator means comprises at least a first indicator light mounted on the cabinet.
32. The point of care station of claim 1 wherein the cabinet further comprises an illumination source adapted for use in illuminating said compartment.
33. The point of care station of claim 27 wherein said illumination sources is disposed within a handle attached to the cabinet.
34. The point of care station of claim 19 wherein the cabinet further comprises

a manual release mechanism for use in unlocking the first securable compartment without electric power and access means for use in accessing said manual release mechanism.

35. The point of care station of claim 1 further comprising a security system for use in detecting whether the cabinet has been moved without proper authorization.

36. The point of care station of claim 1 wherein said docking means comprises a latch mechanism.

37. The point of care station of claim 1 wherein the docking means comprises a latch release mechanism for use in unlocking the cabinet from the pylon.

38. The point of care station of claim 37 wherein said latch release mechanism comprises a foot pedal extending from the cabinet.

39. A method of managing medical items comprising the steps of providing a point of care station comprising: (1) a cabinet having at least a first securable compartment; (2) a pylon assembly comprising a processing unit; said cabinet and said pylon being docked; and (3) a terminal;

providing first security information to unlock said first compartment;

opening said first compartment; and

adding first items to said first compartment.

40. The method of claim 39 further comprising the steps of:

providing the first security information to said terminal to unlock said first compartment;

opening said first compartment; and

removing one or more of the first items from said first compartment.

41. The method of claim 39 additionally comprising the step of closing and locking said first compartment.

42. The method of claim 39 wherein the step of providing first security information to said terminal to unlock said first compartment, comprises at least one step selected from the group consisting of inputting a password, of swiping a card through a card reader, using a bar code scanner, using a biometric reader, using a proximity reader, using an radio frequency identification reader, and using a symbology reader.

43. The method of claim 39 wherein the step of providing first security information to said terminal to unlock said first compartment, comprises at least two steps selected from the group consisting of inputting a password, of swiping a card through a card reader, using a bar code scanner, using a biometric reader, using a proximity reader, using an radio frequency identification reader, and using a symbology reader.

44. The method of claim 39 additionally comprising the steps of:  
providing the cabinet with a second compartment;  
providing second security information that is distinct from the first security information to unlock said second compartment;  
opening said second compartment; and  
adding second items to said second compartment.

45. The method of claim 44 wherein said first security information is insufficient to unlock said second compartment and said second security information is insufficient to unlock said first compartment.

46. The method of claim 39 additionally comprising the step of gaining access to clinical information.

47. The method of claim 39 additionally comprising the step of recording information about the first items in said terminal.

48. The method of claim 40 additionally comprising the step of displaying information about the contents in said first compartment on said terminal.

49. The method of claim 48 further comprising the steps of:  
providing the cabinet with a second compartment; and  
displaying information about the contents in said second compartment on said terminal.

50. The method of claim 39 further comprising the steps of providing the cabinet with a second compartment.

51. The method of claim 39 wherein the method additionally comprises the steps of:

undocking the cabinet from the pylon assembly; and  
moving the cabinet from said pylon assembly.

52. A method of accessing information comprising the steps of:

providing a patient care station comprising: (1) a cabinet having at least a first electronically securable compartment; (2) a pylon assembly comprising a processing unit; and (3) a terminal; said station being proximate to a patient bedside;

providing first security information to said terminal; and  
accessing clinical information.

53. The method of claim 52 wherein prior to the step of providing first security information to said terminal, the method additionally comprises the step of activating a sleep button that pauses a prior activity on said terminal.

54. The method of claim 52 wherein the step of providing first security information comprises at least one step selected from the group consisting of inputting a password, of swiping a card through a card reader, using a bar code scanner, using a biometric reader, using a proximity reader, using an radio frequency identification reader and using a symbology reader.

55. The method of claim 52 wherein the step of providing first security information comprises at least two steps selected from the group consisting of inputting a password, of swiping a card through a card reader, using a bar code scanner, using a biometric reader, using a proximity reader, using an radio frequency identification reader, and using a symbology reader.

56. The method of claim 52 further comprising the steps of:

providing second security information to the terminal; and  
accessing non-clinical information.



57. The method of claim 56 wherein the step of accessing non-clinical information additionally comprises at least one step selected from the group consisting of viewing television on the terminal, accessing the internet from the terminal, viewing a digital video on the terminal, viewing movies on the terminal, listening to music from the terminal, making electronic purchases with the terminal, using messaging tools on the terminal, making a telephone call with the terminal, playing a game on the terminal, and accessing email with the terminal.

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